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# **NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL**

**MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA**

## **THESIS**

### **CONVERGENCE AND RELIGIOUS TERRORISM IN AMERICA**

by

Christopher B. Ashby  
and  
Gregory S. Brinsfield

September 2004

Thesis Advisor:  
Second Reader:

Anna Simons  
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<b>REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE</b>			<i>Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188</i>	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington DC 20503.				
<b>1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)</b>		<b>2. REPORT DATE</b> September 2004	<b>3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED</b> Master's Thesis	
<b>4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE:</b> Convergence and Religious Terrorism in America			<b>5. FUNDING NUMBERS</b>	
<b>6. AUTHOR(S)</b> Christopher B. Ashby and Gregory S. Brinsfield				
<b>7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5000			<b>8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER</b>	
<b>9. SPONSORING /MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> N/A			<b>10. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER</b>	
<b>11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES</b> The views expressed in this thesis are those of the authors and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government.				
<b>12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT</b> Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.			<b>12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE</b> A	
<b>13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words)</b> <p>Religious terrorism, as most recently highlighted by the horrendous 9/11 attacks, is not a new phenomenon. It is not restricted to any one particular religion or belief system, nor is it reserved as a weapon against foreign lands. Domestic religious terrorism is just as prevalent throughout history and is brought about by certain converging factors at particularly susceptible times within the society, such as economic difficulties, new or modified technologies, and social uncertainties. Under these conditions, a charismatic leader with an appealing ideology and access to sufficient resources may become a very powerful threat to society, pitting the secular against the divine. This type of convergence may result in altogether new religious movements, or the unexpected growth of fringe groups that, until they act, are not even identified.</p> <p>Examining the historical convergences of the Reformation, First and Second Great Awakenings, and the trends of modern domestic society, we find that the threads which hold these movements together remain consistent throughout history. Enabled by the rapid growth of technology, these groups have unprecedented potential power. A group that decides to become offensive or use weapons of mass destruction, such as Japan's Aum Shinrikyo, may pose an unacceptable risk to our country.</p>				
<b>14. SUBJECT TERMS</b> Religious Terrorism, Domestic Terrorism, Convergence			<b>15. NUMBER OF PAGES</b> 73	
			<b>16. PRICE CODE</b>	
<b>17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT</b> Unclassified	<b>18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE</b> Unclassified	<b>19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT</b> Unclassified	<b>20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT</b> UL	

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**CONVERGENCE AND RELIGIOUS TERRORISM IN AMERICA**

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**MASTER OF SCIENCE IN DEFENSE ANALYSIS**

from the

**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL  
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## **ABSTRACT**

Religious terrorism, as most recently highlighted by the horrendous 9/11 attacks, is not a new phenomenon. It is not restricted to any one particular religion or belief system, nor is it reserved as a weapon against foreign lands. Domestic religious terrorism is just as prevalent throughout history and is brought about by certain converging factors at particularly susceptible times within the society, such as economic difficulties, new or modified technologies, and social uncertainties. Under these conditions, a charismatic leader with an appealing ideology and access to sufficient resources may become a very powerful threat to society, pitting the secular against the divine. This type of convergence may result in altogether new religious movements, or the unexpected growth of fringe groups that, until they act, are not even identified.

Examining the historical convergences of the Reformation, First and Second Great Awakenings, and the trends of modern domestic society, we find that the threads which hold these movements together remain consistent throughout history. Enabled by the rapid growth of technology, these groups have unprecedented potential power. A group that decides to become offensive or use weapons of mass destruction, such as Japan's Aum Shinrikyo, may pose an unacceptable risk to our country.



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## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

We would like to thank the instructors of the Department of Defense Analysis for their outstanding instruction during our fifteen month program at the Naval Postgraduate School. Particularly, we sincerely appreciate the encouragement and advice of Professors Anna Simons and George Lober who helped us tremendously as our Thesis Advisor and Second Reader respectively. Of course, the support of our families was the foundation from which we were able to sustain the rigors of the program while writing this thesis. Thank you.

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# **I. CONVERGENCES**

## **A. INTRODUCTION**

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and subsequent American invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq continue to drive discussion on the role of religion in terrorism. While most of this debate centers around the threat of Islamic fundamentalism and the various factors that may have given rise to Islamic terrorists, we may very well be missing the signs of our own, homegrown, nascent threat. Just as certain factors in the Middle East may have come together to yield today's Islamic terrorists, so too may certain factors be converging in America, giving rise to a peculiar American type of religious terrorist. In short, the threat posed by religious terrorism is not restricted to a particular religion or belief system. Instead, it's the convergence of various factors at a particular period in a society that leads to frictions between the secular and divine, and it is this friction that can create religious extremism. In fact, this same convergence may result in altogether new religious movements, or the unexpected growth of fringe groups that, until they act, are not even identified.

Of course, the convergence we speak of—one that increases the likelihood of domestic religious terrorism—is more complex than a matter of discrete elements coming together randomly. Instead, it involves a more mandalic interplay between the religious and the secular, a source of friction throughout history, but one that follows the peculiar contours of the society where it occurs, colored by the who, what, when, where, and why of that society. In exploring the possibility of such a convergence in America today, it is tempting to simply examine modern incidents of domestic terrorism in a purely modern framework. However, we believe it is more instructive to first examine the ways previous convergences manifested themselves, working our way forward to modern times along the common thread of traditional western religious faith. With this in mind, we must first go back to the 16th century Reformation, in order to see how religion, social context, unique individuals, and technological



advances produced a template that continues to foster dramatic, violent changes in society. After examining the Reformation, we move forward in time to concentrate on the First and Second Great Awakenings in America, when social upheaval, driven by secular and ecclesiastical frictions, buffeted the United States. We then identify both new and old trends present in our current situation as we analyze the formation of present-day cults and sects that diverge from the social norm. We take note, too, of the fact that growth spurts in technology bring with them new possibilities. For instance, the ability for smaller groups to make a much greater impact on society due to advances in communications and weapons development. Much as the 15th century printing press enabled advertisement of alternative views, today's Internet, cell phones, and wireless technologies make domestic dissent easier to broadcast, especially since promulgation of such views are protected by our unique American freedoms.

## **B. REFORMATION**

There are at least two reasons why it is important to begin with the Reformation. First, many of America's modern religions were originally founded as a result of the Reformation, or have inherited many of their basic tenets from the Reformation. Second, the Reformation occurred in a world in which there was primacy of church over state or, at least, church over monarchy. This is important because, even as the Reformation may have laid the groundwork for eventual dominance of the state, its establishment as a series of successful "revivalist resistance movements," aimed at the *de facto* social hegemon—the Catholic Church—illustrates how control can be lost, even—perhaps, especially—within a community of co-believers: If actors of a religion can become committed to attacking their own religious origins, then how much more willing might they be to attack a *secular* entity (the state) when they believe that that state is a threat to their very existence?

The convergence towards the Reformation began well before Martin Luther's (1483-1586) nailing of his Ninety-Five Theses to the Wittenberg Church doors. In fact, the foundations for the Reformation can be seen at least as early as the 100 Years' War (ca. 1340-1453) conflict between the two European

“superpowers” of the time, England and France. After marching and looting across the French countryside, the English were finally able to coerce the French king, Philip VI, into battle at Crecy in August 1346; the disciplined English army, more reliant on a true yeoman infantry and archery force than the traditional, feudal, knight-centered French army, managed to defeat the far superior French force. The contribution of Crecy to our convergence argument is this: the traditional, feudal method of warfare, relying on knights and unskilled, part-time peasant fighters, was insufficient in the face of disciplined, quasi-professional troops that were organized, trained, and equipped specifically *for* war. The new way of war required unprecedented investment in people, equipment, and training, and this placed serious strains on medieval populations and economies at a time when the Black Death was just arriving in Europe.

Although the population of Europe had recovered significantly following the Great Famine of 1315, the Black Death caused unprecedented numbers of deaths, rapidly decimating the population of Europe, making for the “worst demographic disaster in the history of the world” (James, nd, p. 1). The decimation of the European population created a sudden labor shortage across the continent, and greatly reduced the population pool available for war fighting. Along with the labor shortage, feudal systems made ever greater demands on the peasants, since fewer people meant less production and less profit for estate holders. As a result, peasant rents were increased, and previously abandoned sources of labor—such as the feudal labor dues owed by serfs in England—were reinstated (p. 3). Additionally, a tight labor supply led to an increase in pay for freemen and artisans, as well as increased prices. Further stress to the system came from increased taxation: To keep up with war finances in this tight economic period, monarchies instituted new systems of taxation, especially the English, “[s]ince the ‘ordinary’ revenues of the English crown amounted, in the later thirteenth century, to less than £30,000 per annum, such ambitious and costly campaigning [the ongoing 100 Years’ War] could be paid for only by recourse to ‘extraordinary’ fiscal measures: direct taxation of the laity and clergy, and indirect taxation, principally customs duties and subsidies levied on wool and

cloth exports” (Ayton & Price, 1998). The combination of tight labor, just as it was needed most, and higher taxes led to some of the first rumblings of religious unrest.

The stresses inherent in disease, war, and worsening economic conditions made for revolts in both France and England. However, the English Peasant Revolt of 1381 is most significant for our purposes because of its religious references. The Church, one of the largest landholders at the time, played a central role in making demands on the peasantry; not only did the Church pay no taxes, but peasants were obliged to pay tithes and work Church land for free (Trueman, 2003). In an attempt to control the problems associated with rising labor costs, the English court instituted wage controls. At the same time, a poll tax was initiated to help finance English wars, along with the institution of additional fees and taxes to be paid by the peasantry. All of this finally came to a head in the 1381 revolt, ironically begun through the efforts of two “activist” priests: John Ball and Jack Straw. A narrative of the time, recounting the climactic meeting between Wat Tyler, one of the rebel leaders, and King Richard II (Edward’s successor), clearly reflects the revolt’s anti-Church tenor:

...the King asked him what were the points which he wished to have revised, and he should have them freely, without contradiction, written out and sealed. Thereupon the said Walter rehearsed the points which were to be demanded; and he asked that there should be no law within the realm save the law of Winchester...and that the goods of Holy Church should not remain in the hands of the religious, nor of parsons and vicars, and other churchmen; but that clergy already in possession should have a sufficient sustenance from the endowments, and the rest of the goods should be divided among the people of the parish. And he demanded that there should be only one bishop in England and only one prelate, and all the lands and tenements now held by them should be confiscated, and divided among the commons, only reserving for them a reasonable sustenance...(Halsall, 1996)

Soon after Tyler conveyed these demands to the king, the revolt was violently put down, and dissent was forcibly ended. Despite the failure of the revolt itself, the demands of the rebels—and the involvement of churchmen—

demonstrated definite dissatisfaction with the social system as a whole, and the power of a dominant church, in particular.

Despite the converging elements of social unrest, economic downturns, disease, war, and demonstrations of early religious unrest, the Reformation was unlikely to occur without new ideas and a technology to ensure that those ideas could be widely disseminated. Ironically, the very trade routes which brought the Black Death helped circulate these new ideas as well as revive old ones.

With immediate access to the Mediterranean, 14th century Italian traders had developed extensive trade contacts, stretching from Africa to China. Not only were these trade routes the likely pathway for the Black Death's entry into Europe, but booming international trade created a need for improvements in record keeping and legal documentation, with lawyers and notaries playing key roles in meeting these needs (Piocch, 2003). Since the language of European law—and the Church—was Latin, the legalities of trade fostered the rediscovery of many classical elements of thought:

In the schools, potential notaries learned the specialized legal language of law, known as the 'ars dictaminis.' This was indirectly based on the rhetorical works of Cicero, though it had become rather rigid and rule-bound over the years. However, it meant that potential notaries were exposed to certain of Cicero's works. Gradually, people began to reexamine these works. (de Bracton, 1994)

One of the paramount "re-discoverers" during this period was the poet, and oft-noted father of humanism, Petrarch (1304-1374); this one-time law student and son of a notary not only identified and recovered "numerous 'lost' works," he also "almost single-handedly launched the skill of textual criticism" (Gallatin, nd). The works of Petrarch and others rekindled an interest in the past by reintroducing old ideas, but they did so in the context of the 14th century world. Such interest in the past played an important role in the recovery of additional "lost works," and in employment opportunities for those 14th century thinkers themselves; many, including Petrarch, found patrons willing to finance and support their efforts.

At first, the ideas that developed out of the study of the past were fitted to the religious beliefs of the time. However, the introduction of new ideas and new ways of thinking weren't relegated to the emerging philosophy of humanism, alone. New perspectives and ideas were also seeping into medieval universities, and into the clergy that often taught there, forcing them to examine their own theology, with men such as John Wycliffe (1328?-1384) taking the lead. Wycliffe was a theology and philosophy teacher at Oxford University, whose "strong belief in the doctrine that Christ is man's only overlord and that power should depend on a state of grace made him a champion of the people against the abuses of the church" ("Wyclif, John," 2001). Further cementing support for his populist arguments against Church authority, Wycliffe penned a translation of the Bible from Latin to English, highlighting his view of the Bible as the true source of authority (Urquhart, 1912). Wycliffe's popularity and new doctrine—heresies at the time—were coincident with another converging element, the Great Schism in the Catholic Church.

In 1305, Pope Clement V—a French clergyman—was elected to the papacy, and by 1309 he had moved the entire papal court from Rome to Avignon, France, demonstrating by action the dominant role of France in continental Europe ("Clement V," 2001). The papal capitol remained Avignon until Pope Gregory XI finally returned to Rome in 1377, where he died the following year ("Gregory XI," 2001). Under duress from rioting Italian Catholics, the Church elected an Italian pope—Urban VI—who would remain in Rome (Nelson, 2001). This unsettled the French cardinals in Rome, who consequently fled to Avignon and elected their own French pope (Nelson, 2001). Such an invidious split in the Church only fed social restlessness: First, each side accused the other of heresy, "and anyone accepting sacraments from a heretical...cleric would be considered excommunicate"; second, "[t]here were now two papal capitols for which it was necessary to provide upkeep...two entire papal administrations to be maintained in a style befitting their dignities" (Nelson, 2001).

To recap thus far, first, there is an on-going war between two great powers in a Church-dominated Europe. New efficiencies of war have made knight-centric battle obsolete; increasingly, success in battle depends on yeoman, which then places greater demands on the populace and the economy to supply personnel and financing. Next, the Black Death arrives in Europe, leading to drastic demographic and economic shifts, along with wrenching religious and psychological stress. At the same time, extensive trade has not only brought the plague itself, but has also led to a rediscovery of past ideas and the birth of humanism. These ideas are percolating throughout the intellectual community of Europe, including among the clergy, some of whom—albeit a miniscule minority—begin to question their own doctrine. Finally, a split in the Church means two papal capitols and two popes—one in Rome and one in France—which in turn fuels religious conflict and adds to the economic strains on the system.

The Great Schism also does something more, however. It inadvertently sets in motion a more intense questioning of doctrine. We see this most vividly through the treatment of the reformist, John Huss, at a council held to help heal the fracturing Church, the Council of Constance. Following in the footsteps of John Wycliffe, John Huss (1372?-1415) was a Bohemian churchman who not only agreed with many of Wycliffe's tenets, but actively preached against indulgences and the edicts of John XXIII (one of the competing popes, often referred to as an antipope), with dramatic results:

The populace sympathized with these utterances of the university, went in contemptuous procession in front of the archbishop's palace, and made a bonfire of the papal bulls in the market-place. The king, Wenceslaus, forbade all popular insult to the Pope, and executed three young men who declared the indulgences to be a humbug. But Hus, attended by a number of students, took up their bodies, and buried them in the Bethlehem Church. (Lechler, 1894)

In retaliation, John XXIII excommunicated Huss, who went into exile ("Huss, John," 2001). Even in exile, though, Huss continued preaching and writing, clearly reflecting the influence of Wycliffe, whose works were already considered

heretical (Lechler, 1894). Finally, “[a]t the invitation of Holy Roman Emperor Sigismund, who granted him a safe-conduct, Huss presented himself in 1414 at the Council of Constance to justify his views” (“Huss, John,” 2001). Of course, the promise of safe conduct was quickly forgotten, and Huss was subsequently burned at the stake for heresy, and “his ashes were thrown into the Rhine” (Shahan, nd). While alive, Huss’ teaching had significant impact in laying the foundation for the Reformation in Eastern Europe, but “[b]y his death he became a national hero. He was declared a martyr by the University of Prague, and the modern Czech Protestant Church claims to continue his tradition” (“Huss, John,” 2001). In fact, Huss was so revered by his Bohemian followers that they soon organized and, by 1419, began the Hussite Wars, lasting until about 1478 (“Hussites,” 2001).

The significance of Huss to our convergence argument has three parts. First, the Hussite Wars represent some of the first expressions of mass violence centering on the social frictions generated by attempts to reform dominant religious beliefs. Second, in adopting much of the Wycliffe doctrine—and dying for spreading it—Huss not only serves as a link back to Wycliffe, but the notoriety that came with his martyrdom hints at how popular reform efforts had become and how, even in the 15th century, ideas could spread “globally.” Finally, Huss’ execution demonstrates how seriously the Church viewed threats of reform while, at the same time, the Church sought to use the situation to reinforce its old hold over the state, demonstrating its supremacy—to the consternation of many—by contradicting even the promises of the Holy Roman Emperor. None of this could have succeeded, meanwhile, if it weren’t for the manner in which the Council of Constance was organized.

Although Catholic Church councils had been held before the Great Schism, the crisis of papal division could only have been solved by revamping the councilor system into something more than a convention of the ecclesiastical elites who would rubber stamp papal dictums. To solve the problem required building a council with teeth—an organization that would be seen by both Church elites and sovereigns as having authority superior to that of the three competing

popes. Such an organization represented a radical departure from doctrine, and it could only work if a plausible quorum could be built. To achieve a true Catholic quorum meant inviting attendees from throughout Christendom, including contentious Greece. Although Muslim encroachment on the Byzantine Empire had already made for an influx of Greek refugees to central and southern Europe, what an elite Greek presence at such an important event inadvertently did was lay the groundwork for the true return of Greek classics to Italy, a land already in the process of rediscovering its rich, Latin heritage, and a place already noted as the emerging center of humanism. This new source of intellectual ferment, while affecting the intelligentsia, remained somewhat localized and, if not geographically limited, then at least restricted to mostly the upper strata of Renaissance society. But, with the advent of another development, this too was about to change.

As we've already discussed, booming international trade created a need for legal specialists, but by the early 15th century, legal documentation work, coupled with growth in intellectual and ecclesiastical publishing efforts, led to a "growing need for the rapid and cheap production of written documents" (Rubinstein, 1994). Of course, this required both paper and printing technology. The first of these was already available; paper had been introduced to Europe by the Moors—following another set of connections back to China—with the first European mill being established in the mid-10th century (History Of Paper, nd). As for printing technology, most documents were either laboriously transcribed by hand or "block printed" using carved, wooden, master page forms which were inked, and then paper was pressed over the forms (Gutenberg's Invention, nd). Such a primitive printing system simply couldn't keep up with demand. Consider the collection of the Duke of Urbino, Federigo da Montefeltro (1422-1482): the Duke collected over 900 books, "[a] great many were ordered from the Florentine bookseller Vespasiano da Bisticci. According to Vespasiano's memoirs, Federigo had thirty to forty scribes continually at work for him for twenty years to create his extraordinary collection" (Library of Congress, 2002). To meet demand, Johann Gutenberg (1397-1468) came up with an ingenious solution;



instead of full page, wooden masters, he used individual letters that could be adjusted and reused as needed (“Gutenberg, Johann,” 2001). Being a good Renaissance capitalist, Gutenberg had a definite profit motive driving him:

Gutenberg foresaw enormous profit-making potential for a printing press that used movable metal type...Gutenberg also saw strong market potential in selling indulgences, the slips of paper offering written dispensation from sin that the Church sold to fund crusades, new buildings and other projects devoted to expanding its dominance. In fact, press runs of 200,000 indulgences at a time were common soon after the handwritten versions became obsolete. (Rubinstein, 1994)

The invention of the printing press not only contributed to solving the printing “bottleneck,” it also “meant that, for the first time, men and women of moderate means could acquire their own books and that both the classics and new works could circulate widely” (de Bracton, 1994). The dramatic increase in printing capability and access to printed products also had strategic implications for both budding reformers and their clerical opponents; printing meant the spread of ideas was not only easier, it was also more difficult to control. Before the introduction of the printing press, dissent could simply be nipped in the bud by imprisoning or executing dissenters; the technology of mass printing provided too many branches of contact for the spread of ideas to be stopped, as Martin Luther (1483-1586) was about to prove.

Luther, an Augustinian monk and professor of theology at the University of Wittenberg, had become incensed over many of the Church’s practices, especially the sale of indulgences. In protest, Luther drew up his Ninety-five Theses, which he posted to the door of the Wittenberg Church (Rupp, 2002). Although he had no intention of breaking away from the Church, seeking reform only, his criticisms of the Papacy quickly caught on with the populace, especially following the printing and widespread distribution of the Theses (Spence, 1960, p. 44). Already having become disgruntled with the ceaseless demands of the Church, peasants, merchants, and many nobles were quick to use Luther’s critique as ammunition. Then, repeatedly calling on him to defend himself, it was

the Church that basically granted Luther an even broader platform for airing his arguments, especially his emphasis on a direct relationship with God:

Every believer, Luther argued, was in effect a priest, and could reach God directly by prayer, without the intercession of ordained ministers or saints...Luther's theology made men free to read the Bible, to interpret scripture...It also removed the mystic function of the priest, and placed him in the role of pastor and servant of the congregation. (Spence, 1960, pp. 44-45)

Such notions presented a tremendous challenge to the authority of the Catholic Church, especially given its emphasis on priestly intercession. With his Augsburg Confession, Luther compounded the challenges to the Church by declaring the need for separation of church and state:

The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth...since the power of the Church grants eternal things, and is exercised only by the ministry of the Word, it does not interfere with civil government; no more than the art of singing interferes with civil government...Therefore the power of the Church and the civil power must not be confounded. The power of the Church has its own commission to teach the Gospel and to administer the Sacraments. Let it not break into the office of another; let it not transfer the kingdoms of this world; let it not abrogate the laws of civil rulers; let it not abolish lawful obedience; let it not interfere with judgments concerning civil ordinances or contracts; let it not prescribe laws to civil rulers concerning the form of the Commonwealth. (Bente & Dau, 1921)

But what must be borne in mind here is that, while Martin Luther is often given the credit for helping initiate the separation of church and state, the ideas Luther promoted—including scripture-centered, internalized worship—were strongly reminiscent of those proposed by humanist philosophers. The real key to Luther's notoriety and eventual fame was the size of the audience that printing technology allowed, and the rising dissatisfaction his audience felt in a church-dominated society.

Since religion and politics were so inseparably intertwined at the time, the Protestant movements Luther fostered could only lead to tremendous turmoil within European society. The growth of Protestant teachings and the doctrine of

church and state separation meant conflict was on the horizon, with many monarchs and nobles seizing the opportunity to cast off Church dominance or to gain more power by allying themselves with one faction or the other. In this uncertain atmosphere, both sides—loyal Catholics and Protestants—began building coalitions. It was only a matter of time before religious wars broke out, with another period of European conflict lasting 100 years, beginning from the middle of the 16th century. During this period, lower level incidents of organized violence and terror abounded: the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre of French Protestants; mass arrests and executions of Protestants across Europe; and persecutions and executions by Protestants, such as the Swiss Calvinists (Kirsch, nd).

However, as violent and chaotic as this age of conflict was, three important developments occurred as a consequence. First, as one of a series of wars during this period, the Thirty Years' War saw the Protestant, Swedish King, Gustav Adolphus bring about the first modern integration of firearms with offensive operations, supplanting the static, set-piece methods of war that had become the standard (Parrott, 2001, p. 22; see also Hart, 1996, pp. 77-152). Second, the success Adolphus and other Protestant leaders enjoyed not only paved the way for future advancements in warfare, but also helped further secure Protestantism's position in Europe. Finally, the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 ushered in an entirely new religious and political arrangement. Westphalia not only ended open warfare between Protestants and Catholics, the treaty also cemented the modern idea of separation of church and state, temporarily alleviating the friction between secular and ecclesiastical domains (Hooker, 1999).

In examining the convergences that led to the Reformation, several elements stand out. First, although European society had long been dominated by a single religion, it was not until the pressures on the population reached a boiling point that conflict with the dominant power arose. However, while the combination of war, disease, and economic uncertainty was significant in seeding the ground, it was still insufficient to bring about the Reformation. Second, the

Reformation case highlights the importance of ideas and the influence these can have, even when they diverge significantly from the norm. Third, while the ideas introduced primarily through humanist philosophers were important in leading to a reformist ideology, it was not until the introduction of a new technology—the printing press—that they could really have an effect. Finally, as the 100 year period of warfare between Protestants and Catholics shows, the introduction of new ideas in response to uncertainty can often themselves have a destabilizing effect. In the case of the Reformation, it would appear that warfare and violent action (and reaction) were ultimately the only means by which equilibrium could be regained.

### **C. THE GREAT AWAKENINGS**

The peace of Westphalia marked a turning point for both Protestantism and Catholicism in that it allowed various Protestant movements to consolidate and grow, while the Catholic Church underwent a series of internal changes. Of course, the very nature of Protestant beliefs and doctrines, especially the notions of internalized and scripture-based worship, meant there would eventually be a plethora of denominations and divisions even within denominations. At the same time, the discovery of the Americas and their subsequent colonization meant that these same churches—the Catholic Church as well as the growing number of Protestant denominations—naturally spread to the newfound lands. The dominance of English Protestantism in the Thirteen Colonies provided a significant religious framework for the accommodation of many other European Protestants in what would become the United States, leading eventually to America's Great Awakenings.

#### **1. The First Great Awakening**

One consequence of the rise of Protestantism was that it helped secure secular governments, ensuring they were no longer obliged to support a mendicant, dominant Church. This meant greater resources could be expended in exploring and exploiting the newly founded colonies. At the same time, the existence of more secular governments, coupled with the variety of religious beliefs fostered by Protestantism, loosened previous taboos on thinking and

questioning, and Enlightenment ideas and ideals found fertile ground. The Enlightenment, in turn, fostered new applications of reason and rationalism to religion and science, giving rise to such beliefs as deism and atheism (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2003). In this way, the ideas introduced by the Enlightenment “began to challenge the assumption that traditional social forms reflected and followed the divine order of reality. As people experienced the upheaval attendant upon forging new political structures, they learned firsthand that human beings have a role in shaping their own destinies” (Ammerman, 1991, p. 10).

Many of these new views came into direct conflict with already-routinized Protestant doctrines at a time when church attendance was dwindling (Kellner, 1997). This gave rise to a new period of turmoil and uncertainty as the old friction between secular temptations and religious tugs also led to arguments over the rational versus the divine. Adding to a growing crisis of faith, a nascent Industrial Revolution introduced demographic and socio-economic disruptions. “The early 18th century marked the advent of the consumer society and the impersonal marketplace” (Kellner, 1997). The rise of consumerism and increased production of goods turned markets into centers of social interaction, supplanting, to a degree, the more traditional gathering places, such as the local parish church.

In response to this age of rapid change, Protestant churches entered a difficult period of revival and doctrinal modification. However, they faced at least two big problems: first, despite the emphasis of reformers such as Luther on “the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers,” major Protestant religions—such as the Church of England—had developed a significant hierarchal structure. In addressing this problem, many Protestant leaders discovered a basic organizational truth: Rigid, hierarchical structures are usually unable to adjust to a rapidly changing environment (Daft, 2003, p. 47). Recognizing the disconnect between existing church organizations and the challenges of faith posed by the ideas of the Enlightenment, charismatic, evangelical Protestants, such as John Wesley and George Whitefield, developed their own plan of revival—attempting

this first within the bounds of their church and doctrine, but later, after being disowned by their churches, branching off on their own. Always, though, they maintained a renewed emphasis on a worshiper's personal relationship with God (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2003).

The second problem was one of geography. While the export of Protestant beliefs to the new world may have been successful, maintaining the structures to support those beliefs was much more difficult, given the distances. Although the parish systems of Europe had been transplanted to the new world, "[u]nlike the compact communities of the old world, the small farms and plantations of the new spread out into the wilderness, making both communication and ecclesiastical discipline difficult" (Matthew, 1996). One solution to this conundrum was found in the form of localized, community-wide revival meetings, headed by roving, charismatic speakers, and assisted by another socio-techno innovation: advertising (Lambert, 2001).

Although John Wesley and George Whitefield shared a close working relationship, it was Whitefield who struck on the notion of applying the techniques of the new marketplace to religious evangelism (Lambert, 2001). "For his revivals, Whitefield oversaw the creation of the most extensive publicity apparatus yet witnessed: Pamphlets, newspaper articles and advertising, testimonials, endorsements, advance publicity agents, and more" (Chang, 2001, p. 4). Whitefield's revivals marked a departure from the more traditional, parish-centered efforts of the "circuit preacher." Instead of concentrating on the small community parishes where the people were, Whitefield's advertising and publicity blitz brought a much larger audience to *him*. Benjamin Franklin, a Whitefield acquaintance, remarked on Whitefield's work, "The multitudes of all sects and denominations that attended his sermons were enormous, and it was [a] matter of speculation to me, who was one of the number, to observe the extraordinary influence of his oratory on his hearers..." (Lenant, 2002). In "selling" revivals as not only religious events, but also as social occasions, the publicity following each event generated more and more interest, allowing the message to reach more and more people. Through effective marketing, large group meetings, and

his considerable charisma, Whitefield was able to “revive” many previous believers, even while attracting and converting non-believers.

While Whitefield’s innovations had tremendous impact in creating the First Great Awakening, and while his use of mass-media would serve as a model for later religious figures, his methods were not accepted by everyone, and especially not by the more traditional church leaders. This is because these efforts “undermined the authority of church leaders, in that revivalists called on people to trust their own experience and not depend on the authority of church officials” (Fogel, 2000, p. 20). These sorts of complaints are indicative of the Awakening’s growing influence on colonial politics, which lasted well beyond the heyday of revival meetings themselves. In fact, even protests against the Stamp Act reflected the Awakening’s call for independence from a church hierarchy by including complaints by many Protestant groups that the assignment of a bishop for the Church of England “would threaten their religious liberty” (Stories, 2003).

More and more, the Awakening was “marked by attacks on British moral and political corruption and by charges that this corruption was being foisted on the American colonies, where it threatened the attainment of spiritual and political virtue” (Fogel, 2000, p. 20). This rebellion against authority—first aimed at religious orthodoxy, but later taking on a more political cast—clearly helped prepare the American populace for the eventual American Revolution (Fogel, 2000). It also laid the foundation for the social activism of the Second Great Awakening.

In examining the First Great Awakening, we see the same thread of religious and secular friction that reaches back to the Reformation. However, in this case, the issues no longer revolve around who controls the political system. Nor do they center on combating a decadent, dominating religion. Instead, the conflict generated by the Awakening is, at first, mostly inward, with people and churches seeking ways to reconcile long-held beliefs with changing secular practices, while at the same time addressing the challenge of dwindling membership. It is interesting to note that the solution to these problems came

from a man who, like Martin Luther during the early Reformation, had no intention of leaving his church, but eventually had to break away to succeed in realizing his God-given vision. George Whitefield's success in bringing about the Awakening was, in large part, due also to the clever application of newly available technology—again, echoing the kind of difference the printing press made in helping bring about the Reformation. Finally, it is interesting to note the political influence the Awakening had on the American Revolution. Although the Revolution was fought for secular, not religious goals, the ideal of religious *liberty* was certainly an influencing factor. Indeed, in the American Revolution religious beliefs helped reinforce a secular cause. This, too, marks a difference from the Reformation.

## **2. The Second Great Awakening**

The Second Great Awakening, lasting from about 1790 to the mid 1800s, built upon many of the elements of the previous period, with the booming growth of newspapers amounting to yet another method of mass appeal. However, by this period, the message itself had changed. The goal in the Second Great Awakening was still revival and conversion, but not so much to “save” the individual as it was to change the world. The aim was to return to the true word of God, because “the American mission was to build God’s kingdom on earth” (Fogel, 2000, p. 21).

With many revivalists preaching a literal interpretation of the Bible, new beliefs began to emerge, “and millenarian ideas reached new intensity nationwide...” (Jenkins, 2000, p. 31). The development of apocalyptic and millenarian groups was a natural result of bringing “the egalitarian spirit of the American Revolution into religion” (Zakaria, 2003, p. 206). Egalitarianism provided a wide-open field for the emergence of charismatic leaders, even as the emotionalism of revivalist activities further eroded the hierarchal structures of many established churches, making for a fertile field of potential followers. It was this combination of egalitarian religion, open interpretation of scripture, and emotionally charged revivalism—improving on George Whitefield’s 18th century model—that opened the door for men like the pre-millennialist William Miller,



progenitor of today's Seventh Day Adventist Church, and Joseph Smith, the founder of the Mormon Church.

Despite the apparent openness fostered by the Second Great Awakening, tolerance for "fringe religions" began to decline almost as soon as they were established, and one prime target of intolerance was Joseph Smith's newly formed Mormon Church. In claiming to have discovered the "new truth" through the divine revelation of *The Book of Mormon*, Smith was immediately at odds with most Christian believers. However, Joseph Smith was a man of great charisma who was well-versed in the art of publicity, and he was able to attract a significant following which, following "divine" direction, he shepherded to the promised land of Missouri. Unfortunately, the Mormon "Saints" were soon at odds with their non-Mormon "Gentile" neighbors (Krakauer, 2003). Strife between the Saints and Gentiles eventually grew to the point where real violence broke out, and Smith was forced to move his flock again—this time under threat of extermination—to Illinois, where continued conflict with the Gentiles resulted in Joseph Smith's death, and yet another move for the growing sect (Krakauer, 2003). This time they headed further west to the Mexican territory of Utah in 1846, under the leadership of Brigham Young (History of the Mormon Church, 2002).

It is interesting to note that, despite the years of persecution, and despite the accompanying negative publicity generated against the Mormons by the mainstream press, Mormon converts continued to flow into the sect. What, we might wonder, could account for the continued growth of a fringe group that was—popularly, at least—so discredited? One likely contributor was the nature of mainstream religion, itself. As Jenkins (2000) writes in *Mystics and Messiahs*, "perhaps the largest component of the religious spectrum in contemporary America remains what it has been since colonial times: a fundamentalist evangelicalism with powerful millenarian strands" (p. 5). A second probable contributing factor was the ongoing reconfiguration of American society as it adjusted to the full force of the Industrial Revolution and the technological changes it wrought. During this time, the United States not only saw its

population become more and more urbanized, but there were also severe economic problems (to include the depression of 1837). At the same time, territorial expansion and the moral struggle with slavery only added to societal turmoil and uncertainty.

Joseph Smith's Mormon faith offered both a direct appeal via millenarian promises, as well as the security provided by "a prophetic individual claiming divine revelation, in a setting that repudiated conventional assumptions about property, family life, and sexuality" (Jenkins, 2000, p. 6). In addition, Smith held out the added "promise that each follower would be granted an extraordinarily intimate relationship with God" (Krakauer, 2003, p. 70). Ironically, the harsh treatment of Smith and his believers likely enhanced bonds within the Mormon community, especially since the Israelites, the original chosen people, had been similarly persecuted. In any case, it was with a growing congregation, that kept prevailing against the odds, that Young settled in Utah.

Arriving in Utah in the summer of 1847, the Saints began a period of settlement and consolidation, even as new converts continued to arrive (History of the Mormon Church, 2002). However, the safety valve of open frontiers was rapidly closing as the United States itself continued to expand westward. In fact, the United States annexed the Mormons' Utah homeland as a territory in 1850, but with Brigham Young appointed governor (Krakauer, 2003, p. 202). Annexation helped rekindle Gentile critical interest in Mormon activity, especially following Young's 1851 and 1852 public announcements of the Mormons' doctrinal support for polygamy (Krakauer, 2003). To make matters worse, Young began making bellicose statements, reaffirming the primacy of the Mormon faith over the laws of the United States. This coincided with alarming reports from non-Mormon federal officials who visited Utah, so that, by 1857, newly elected American President Buchanan, already tired of Young's intransigence, "dispatched a contingent of federal officials to restore the rule of law in Utah, including a new territorial governor to replace Brigham Young" (Krakauer, 2003, p. 208). Thus began the "Mormon War," which, while it never developed into a full-fledged shooting conflict, was significant for demonstrating what government

may risk whenever it attempts to rein in a group that defies social norms and openly questions federal laws.

The end of July, 1857 saw Buchanan's 6,000-man "Utah Army," under the command of Brigadier General William Harney, begin their march from Fort Leavenworth, Kansas to Utah (Bancroft, 1889, p. 500). Since the rail network had not yet expanded westward, the army would have to acquire supplies along the way by advance teams. "On the 8th of September Captain Van Vliet [Harney's advance man] arrived in Salt Lake City, with orders to purchase forage and lumber, and to assure the Mormons that the troops would not molest or interfere with them" (Bancroft, 1889, pp. 505-506). On his arrival, Brigham Young and the Mormon elders warned Van Vliet that they would not accept a new governor, nor would they support the posting and feeding of the inbound Utah Army. To Van Vliet's response that this would only escalate the situation to genuine warfare, Young replied:

We are aware that such will be the case; but when these troops arrive they will find Utah a desert; every house will be burned to the ground, every tree cut down, and every field laid waste. We have three years' provisions on hand, which we will cache, and then take to the mountains and bid defiance to all the powers of the government. (Bancroft, 1889, pp. 507-508)

Van Vliet soon left Salt Lake City, carrying the Mormon's message back to General Harney. By this time, the Mormons, who had built up a 5,000 man militia, initiated operations with the following order:

On ascertaining the locality or route of the troops, proceed at once to annoy them in every possible way. Use every exertion to stampede their animals and set fire to their trains. Burn the whole country before them and on their flanks. Keep them from sleeping, by night surprises; blockade the road by felling trees or destroying the river fords where you can. Watch for opportunities to set fire to the grass on their windward, so as, if possible, to envelop their trains. Leave no grass before them that can be burned. Keep your men concealed as much as possible, and guard against surprise. (Bancroft, 1889, p. 511)

Using these tactics, Mormon raiders targeted the Utah Army's supply trains, ultimately forcing the federal troops to winter in a series of burned-out forts, preventing the federals from reaching Salt Lake City. Fortunately, before the conflict could accelerate, a compromise was reached that effectively ended the war.

The very fact that the Mormon War didn't evolve into serious conflict meant that key issues—such as the legitimacy of polygamy, and de facto control of the territory—remained unresolved, and could thereby continue to fester. It was only with an 1890 U.S. Supreme Court decision, “allowing church holdings to be seized by the government,” that the Mormons felt forced to accede to federal control, and to disavow the doctrine of polygamy (Krakauer, 2003). However, it should be noted that not all Mormons abandoned polygamy, and even today there are still some communities that follow the old doctrine (Krakauer, 2003).

Interestingly, in the Mormon case, the solution to friction and church-state conflict wasn't found in the threat of violence, but in threats to the capital base of the church. It is likely that, while church leaders were willing to accept the risk of violence and physical destruction, they realized the church had grown to the point where capital resources were now the key to long-term survival. This long-term outlook has served the Mormon faith well; ever since agreeing to modify church doctrine to meet the requirements of greater American society, the Mormon Church, now generally accepted as a mainstream religion, is one of the fastest growing in the world, adding about one million members every three years (History of the Mormon Church, 2002).

Although we can trace the development of a healthy, modern Mormon Church, along with a thriving Adventist Church, all the way back to the Reformation, what is more important is how cyclic periods of convergence recur in eerily similar ways. With the right leader, and under the right circumstances, even long-held, stable belief systems can be canted in unpredictable, often dangerously violent, directions. In addition, it would appear that such “canting of faith” has become easier because the tendency over time towards more and

more egalitarian religions paves the way for the introduction and acceptance of increasingly radical beliefs. For instance, it is highly unlikely that the Mormon Church could have survived in the less liberal-minded period of the Reformation. It's likewise hard to imagine how modern movements—like the Solar Temple or Heaven's Gate cults—could have gained traction during the time of the Second Great Awakening. In other words, while the *pattern* of convergence is similar, the tools and openings available for those who seek reform, redress, or revolution change with the times. As important as timing itself is—e.g., the Mormons were a consolidated movement *before* the federal government moved against them—developments in the “weapons of the weak” also have to be factored in. *Could* the Mormons have won a series of battles *against* the United States Army? It would appear the Mormons thought so.

The Mormon's willingness to fight a war against a far superior—albeit, overextended—enemy, coupled with the Mormon's implementation of innovative, indirect tactics, represents a significant step in the interaction between believers and the government. Before the Mormon War, technology was primarily exploited as a means to spread the word, or gather an audience for persuasion and conversion. However, the Mormon War serves as an example of how technology, in this case, *military* technology, can provide an entirely new context for dealing with the friction between church and state by providing people themselves with the means to at least temporarily unravel the government's monopoly on violence. People, we should note, may then side with religion against the state, and if not immediately, then over time.

#### **D. TODAY**

Challenging the state's monopoly on violence appears to be more significant today than ever, especially in light of the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing, which was allegedly carried out in retaliation for the government's 1993 assault on a Branch Davidian compound in Waco, Texas. Interestingly, unlike during the Mormon War, domestic groups no longer focus exclusively on government as the prime target. The “Unabomber,” for instance, went after academics, and anti-abortionists have targeted clinics and doctors. Indeed,

targeting now includes those who appear to gain directly or indirectly from government policies the attackers disagree with, as well as those who, in the attacker's mind, support government policies. This means a much broader target set, to include civilians. At the same time, the weaponry available today includes weapons of incredible destructive capability, while training on how to use them is readily accessible. To make matters worse, increasingly varied religious beliefs practically guarantee that some religious groups will always find points of friction—either with the government, directly, or with social norms, in general—that can serve as flashpoints to justify use of such weapons. It is important to also bear in mind that, as history indicates, these points of friction aren't so much a consequence of radical ideas, as the uncertainties and turmoil of the times.

Some modern, quasi-religious sects, such as Aryan Nations, the Church of Jesus Christ-Christian, the Sword and the Arm of the Lord, and Posse Comitatus, have already seized on contentious issues, such as racial equity, gun control, and the American income tax system, as mobilizing sources (Jenkins, 2000). But there now seems to be a fresher current of factors from which to draw. One of the most striking recent developments in American politics has been the increasing polarity of the electorate, best borne out by the contentious 2000 election. While polarity is, of course, a natural development in a two-party system, the real significance comes when we look at the geographic and demographic profile of the polarized electorate, and its implications. As reporter Mark O'Keefe (2004) writes:

Results of a recent Zogby poll portray not only separate nations - the blue states of the upper, outer rim that Al Gore won in 2000 and the red states of the South and heartland won by President Bush - but also distinct moral world views...In the red states, 31 percent favor a right to abortion in all situations, while 42 percent favor such a right in the blue states. In the red states, 25 percent would legalize same-sex unions; in the blue states, 42 percent would. A little more than half the respondents in the red states own guns, while about one-third do in the blue states. In red America, 47 percent describe themselves as "born again"; in blue America, 30 percent do. (p. 1).

While differences in moral world views are significant, this polarization also marks another important split, that between rural and urban America: “small town vote—38 percent for Gore, 58 percent for Bush...large cities with populations over 500,000...71 percent for Gore and 26 percent for Bush” (Victor, 2001). This division between blue and red—between urban and rural—would appear to provide a readily exploitable source for mobilization, especially if it can be combined with an appeal to the millennial traditions of American religion.

In *Harvest of Rage*, Joel Dyer (1997) paints a vivid picture of just such a method of exploitation, as radical antigovernment groups, espousing a fundamentalist religious viewpoint, attempt to draw in the dissatisfied and dispossessed. Focusing primarily on rural America, and America’s small farm crisis of the 1980s, Dyer (1997) shows again and again how radical groups manage to gain footholds by making sense of the disenfranchised’s disadvantaged economic situation and declining rural infrastructure. Although the situation for American farmers has improved greatly since the crisis days of the late 1980s, the latest USDA statistics, ending in 2002, still indicate significant sources of economic stress: 38 percent of farm borrowers are already at their bank’s loan limits, with 3.3 percent likely to be cut off by their bank completely, while “legal foreclosure” makes up 12 percent of all farm liquidations—the highest it’s been in eleven years (USDA, 2003). In a similar manner, growing concern over job outsourcing and a declining real wage could serve as further sources of friction, and as mobilizing issues for attracting even the urban dissatisfied.

The important thing for most Americans about topics like outsourcing and falling pay scales isn’t whether these are real, serious threats, but the *perception* that they are. Assisting that perception, when we look more closely, is our old thread, new technology. It’s the *ability* to transfer jobs such as telemarketing, database management, and even basic manufacturing that gives teeth to the idea that “your job may be next.” Similarly, it’s the technological revolution that enables companies to gain higher levels of productivity with fewer employees, making for lower real wages. In other words, many of the points of friction today,

especially in urban America, reflect the impact of new technologies across society and, in an effort to identify the source, people turn to their traditional lexicon.

As Fogel (2000) notes, “there has been a recurring lag between the vast technological transformations and the human adjustments to those transformations” (p. 8). It’s during such times that new religions or revivals hold tremendous appeal. Fogel (2000) continues, “It is this lag that has provoked the crises that periodically usher in profound reconsiderations of ethical values, that produce new agendas for ethical and social reform, and that give rise to political movements that champion the new agendas” (pp. 8-9). As Dyer (1997) notes, “The growing economic frustration of the Rust Belt working class is being exploited by the antigovernment movement in the same fashion as the rural world” (p. 221). Of course, there are many more motivators beyond just the economy; in dealing with a changing world, rural and urban Americans struggle with changing social values, embodied by hot-button issues like abortion, multiculturalism, public expressions of faith, homosexuality and gay marriage.

Technology doesn’t just represent a disruptive or discombobulating face—it can also be used *by* those who feel increasingly insecure or threatened. Indeed, just as the advent of the printing press opened up new avenues for the spread of ideas, and just as George Whitefield and Joseph Smith harnessed the technologies of their day, there are a *series* of convergences people can take advantage of: Advanced communications via the internet and satellite phones; accelerated transportation through air travel and high-speed rail; advances in the sciences, allowing “homemade” construction of explosives, or even biochem weapons; and advances in military technology, including WMD, and new weapons delivery systems. Electronic resources are available—even as “freeware”—to enable encrypted communications, or even the hijacking of other computers attached to the internet. As an information resource, the internet not only allows extremist groups to set up their own information and virtual recruitment centers, but it also affords anyone, including independent actors following the “leaderless resistance” model, access to a plethora of “how to”



books on a variety of bomb making techniques and general sabotage. Consider this short list of books available from Amazon.com: *Silent Death*; *Home Workshop Explosives*; *Improvised Munitions Black Book*; and the *Do-It-Yourself Gunpowder Cookbook*. Information is also readily available for intelligence purposes; the floor plans of buildings, photographs of significant sites, and even free satellite photographs, are all just a mouse click away. If there is any doubt that someone would use such information, consider the comments of Aryan Nation founder, Richard Butler when asked about possible Iraqi involvement in his organization: "...we've never trained with the Iraqis or learned from them how to build bombs. For that you just have to go on the Internet to get the information" (O'Meara, 2004).

So far, we've said little about how those who would want to motivate and mobilize against the state in the name of religion self-organize. We also haven't addressed the question of how—in today's rational, techno-savvy world—successful extremist, religious-based groups can even develop. Yet, as counterintuitive as it may seem, our examination of history suggests that religious extremism is actually a logical outgrowth of the coming together of economic turmoil, uncertainty, new or modifiable technologies, and changes in the available means of defense or destruction. The exact convergence itself may be new, but the fact of convergence is not. Likewise, an entrepreneurial leader who is in "the right place at the right time" can then capitalize on the dissent that is *enabled* as much as it is *inspired* by convergences among these factors. That too is nothing new, though how he or she appeals to followers will be.

## **II. FORMATION OF THE ORGANIZATION**

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

In her article, "Theories of Terrorism: Instrumental and Organizational Approaches," Martha Crenshaw explains that the formation of terrorist organizations (and not the environment) is the critical variable in terrorist violence. She argues that the social conditions that inspire grievances are continuously present, but violence only occurs under certain circumstances when these types of groups form and mature into operational terrorist organizations. The three factors that will determine whether an organization can even take off are leadership, resources, and ideology (Rapaport, 1998). Most successful religious cults and terrorist organizations feature a charismatic leader, since he is generally necessary for the birth of the organization and the subsequent recruitment of followers. The degree to which these groups then have access to a supply of mobilizable resources and possess a legitimate ideology will consequently determine their propensity for survival and success.

### **B. CHARISMATIC LEADERSHIP**

Crenshaw states that entrepreneurship is an essential ingredient:

...the leaders who establish an organization must skillfully create and manipulate incentives to attract members. The founders must have an exceptional commitment to the group's purposes and an exaggerated sense of the group's likely efficacy. In a potentially violent organization, this sense of efficacy might come from assessing the government's weakness, observing the apparent success of other, similar groups, or acquiring the support of foreign governments. (Rapaport, 1998, p. 21)

The dramatic case of Aum Shinrikyo illustrates the potential control that a charismatic leader can attain. Shoko Asahara capitalized on the present trend toward cults in Japan and easily gained followers who were interested in their own enlightenment. According to Crenshaw, following the initial recruitment into the organization, the group's goals and ideology are likely to change to favor the wishes of its leader. We see this, too, in Aum Shinrikyo, since under Asahara's influence, Aum Shinrikyo members committed numerous crimes and attempted a

series of chemical and biological attacks which they most likely would never have attempted alone. A charismatic leader who can draw in a select group of people, who will then recruit additional followers, has the potential for extreme power and the ability to accomplish his goals on a much grander scale than he would on his own. Asahara demonstrated this by recruiting some of Japan's foremost scientists and engineers to Aum Shinrikyo who, in turn, enabled the cult to operate at a frightening level of sophistication.

Much has been written about the phenomenon of charisma. First used by Max Weber to describe political leadership, the word "charisma" is derived from theological roots and refers to the talent given by God as a free gift or favor. Weber described charismatic leadership as the third method by which someone can assert his authority over others, following traditional leadership and rational-legal leadership (Elwell, 1996). Unlike the latter two methods of leadership, charismatic leadership depends on the force of the leader's personality. Weber believed that very few people are capable of becoming charismatic leaders, and that charisma leads to social stratification since only a select few possess charismatic traits. According to Weber, charisma is entirely dependent upon the prevailing conditions and a followership; charisma is created and sustained by the loyalty and devotion of the members of a particular niche of society ("Max Weber," n.d.). Furthermore, periods of social unrest tend to bring charismatic leaders forward. A disenchanted portion of society may be ready to mobilize toward a goal, but lack cohesion and leadership. Then, when that portion happens across a stimulating leader who espouses goals similar to theirs, it feels only natural to follow him or her. In the case of The Covenant, the Sword, and the Arm of the Lord (CSA), for instance, James Ellison specifically sought out the disenchanted after receiving a "vision from God." Ellison purchased a remote plot of land in Arkansas and invited "seekers, drug addicts, and ex-convicts" to join him in his compound (Tucker, 2000, p. 140). Significantly, once formed, the group remained dependent on him. Often, when the leader dies, the entire organization dies, withers, or mutates into something different than the original concept.

We all have some idea about who we consider charismatic. Charisma combines charm and personal magnetism, and carries the ability to persuade others to endorse your vision with passion. Films of Adolf Hitler's speeches strike a nerve and hold our attention regardless of whether we speak German or not. His staccato gestures and emphatic tone mesmerize us as we try to figure out what he is saying that could be so incredibly important. John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King Jr., and Franklin D. Roosevelt are considered by many to have been charismatic, but the same then has to be said of Charles Manson, David Koresh, and Shoko Asahara. A strong personal attraction to these men under the right social conditions creates a very strong leader-follower relationship in which followers may display a blind trust as they follow the leader's every request and demand. This unconditional loyalty can have catastrophic effects when the charismatic leader is psychologically prone to violence or is pursuing an anti-social ideology.

Charismatic leaders attract attention and are understood easily because they are good communicators. These men or women have the remarkable ability to distill complex ideas into simple but powerful messages while using symbols, metaphors, analogies, and stories to relate to their followers on a personal level (Sellers, 1996). Often these leaders rebel against conventional thought, which may be what initially attracts their followers; a common enemy (such as the government) can be a powerful motivator when organizing or recruiting a followership. Charismatic leaders seem to relish risk typically, and their followers seem to enjoy the thrill of doing what they have not done before (or would not do alone) as they crusade toward a common goal.

According to Sellers' article, "Charismatic leadership: Do you believe in magic" (1996), the development of a charismatic leader can be broken down into four stages. First, the leader senses opportunity and formulates a vision. Next, he articulates the vision. Third, he builds trust in the vision. And fourth, he achieves the vision. The opportunity the charismatic leader senses and the vision he formulates become an organizing myth. Normally, leaders are trying to correct a perceived flaw, whether in society, their workplace, or the world. For

apocalyptic groups, this formulating myth often relates to the “hopes and fears of the end of the world as we know it, to be replaced by a new, fairer, better world” (Stern, 2003, p. 19). In other words, an untapped opportunity is exploited in order to meet the needs of the leader *and* his followers. His ability to relate to his followers’ needs sets the charismatic leader apart from other men in leadership positions.

Next, the charismatic leader must articulate his vision. Most charismatic personalities are blessed with a great sense of strategic vision and, in articulating their vision of the future, these men begin to gain their followers’ loyalty by conveying the importance and viability of their vision and goals. This can be done through personal risk-taking, unconventional expertise, and self-sacrifice (Sellers, 1996). For instance, after populating his compound with followers, James Ellison began to change the priorities of CSA to reflect their new “paramilitary function.” He became a vocal national leader and attended events such as the Aryan Nations Congress where he voiced concerns that the collapse of the nation’s economy was imminent (Tucker, 2000, p. 144). Additionally, as cult leaders articulate their vision, they may tend to create their own religion and/or interpret their particular sacred texts in such a way as to suit themselves best. They may choose selected portions from several different religions, as Shoko Asahara did, mixing Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism or, like Osama bin-Laden, they may focus on one primary religion but select only the texts that best support their ideology (Stern, 2003, p. 19).

The final stage in the development of a charismatic leader involves achievement of his vision. To win his followers’ hearts and minds, such an individual may use personal example and role modeling, or he may isolate the group, further developing its cohesion as he has them begin to stockpile resources. By isolating his followers, a leader of this type protects them from the contagions and “pollutants” inherent in the impure society that surrounds them. The organization becomes the followers’ new family and the only world that they trust. The isolated compound provides shelter and security which is noticeably absent when members leave the gates. According to Jessica Stern, for example,

Kerry Noble, second-in-command of the Covenant, the Sword, and the Arm of the Lord, felt weak and was repeatedly humiliated whenever he was away from the cult (Stern, 2003, p. 19).

### **C. OTHER TECHNIQUES**

Most terrorist groups and cults employ additional techniques in order to enhance commitment to the organization. According to Stern, these include:

sharing property and/or signing it over to the group upon admission, limiting interactions with the outside world, employing special terms for the outside world, ignoring outside newspapers, speaking a foreign language or special jargon, requiring free love, polygamy, or celibacy, no compensation for labor, communal work efforts, daily meetings, mortification procedures such as confession, mutual surveillance and denunciation, institutionalization of awe for the group and its leaders through the attribution of magical powers, the legitimization of group demands through appeals to ultimate values (such as religion) and the use of special forms of address. (Stern, 2003, p. 20)

Most groups, sects, and cults that engage in these behaviors pose no direct harm to the general public, at least not initially. But, after their members begin to gain a sense of corporate identity, and especially when this is done by focusing them on a common enemy, potential for violence grows as they begin to view the now-foreign, outside world that surrounds them as increasingly threatening. Generally, the group becomes further isolated and may relocate to a defensive structure, such as a fenced compound or remote tract of wilderness land. Extreme paranoia prevails and members believe that they are in imminent danger or under surveillance. They increasingly demonize or dehumanize “outsiders” and feel as if they need to arm themselves in order to survive. It is once the organization reaches this point, and begins to obtain weapons, that it should be considered a threat to the public. In the case of CSA, for instance, group members felt that they needed weapons to protect themselves and their stockpiles of food. With the imminent coming of the End Times, outsiders were certain to try to steal their food and other resources, and the government was surely looming, ready to take away their weapons and means of defense (Stern, 2003, p. 20).

The paranoia expressed by CSA in this example was neither entirely fabricated nor unfounded. What happened to David Koresh's Branch Davidians offers searing evidence that the government may well attack a group that stockpiles weapons. If only CSA looked further back in time – to the Mormons' experience – it would have further reason to worry and justify its paranoia. In turn, this paranoia further isolates the group and increases their dependency on one another.

In today's fight against terrorism, we must not forget the domestic threat. By identifying how these organizations form and the techniques that they use to isolate and strengthen their followership, we may be able detect potentially dangerous groups before they have the means to strike out offensively. The degree to which the government can monitor individuals and groups is up for debate – too much monitoring, even for our own security, will trigger cries that the government is infringing upon our civil liberties. Too little interaction, and we have a recipe for potential disaster. In the following case, we look at Aum Shinrikyo's formation, leadership, and access to resources. Although not an American domestic group, Aum is important to look at because the Japanese society reflects many of the same characteristics found in the United States: Japan is a technological country with a government that values civil liberties and is hesitant to impede in the actions of religious groups. This example of governmental *in*action contrasts with the siege on the Branch Davidians in Waco, Texas and illustrates the potential power of a terrorist group that goes unchecked.

### **III. CASE STUDY**

#### **A. INTRODUCTION**

Aum Shinrikyo offers a particularly compelling illustration of everything we have been discussing so far. Not only did this cult follow the classic growth pattern, starting with one man and his ideas of society, but thanks to Shoko Asahara's unique ideology and charismatic charm, Aum Shinrikyo was able to recruit professionals as well as blue-collar citizens, who helped him amass an unprecedented amount of resources and assemble a range of weapons of mass destruction – all undetected by the state. Unlike most other such groups, Aum turned from defense to offense and recognized no taboos either in targets or weapons. For these among other reasons, it seems worthwhile to examine Aum in greater detail, but especially since it represents the kind of convergence we should most dread: A charismatically led group with access to weapons of mass destruction and espousing a convincing ideology in opposition to the state.

So far, Aum's extensive research, development, and employment of chemical and biological weapons remain unprecedented in history. Aum staged at least twenty attacks between 1990 and 1995 using both chemical and biological weapons (Tucker, 2000, p. 207). This apocalyptic sect gained worldwide notoriety for its 1995 sarin attack on the Tokyo subway system which killed twelve people and injured more than a thousand. How did Aum Shinrikyo manage to recruit over 40,000 followers and amass assets worth approximately \$1 billion while developing and manufacturing chemical and biological weapons? (p. 209) At the forefront of Aum Shinrikyo was Shoko Asahara, the group's charismatic, authoritarian, and mystical leader.

#### **B. AUM SHINRIKYO**

Shoko Asahara grew up as Chizua Matsumoto in a poor family on the southern Japanese island of Kyushu (Stern, 1999, p.60). Asahara was blind in his left eye and half-sighted in his right eye. He attended a school for the blind where he regularly took advantage of the children who were more handicapped than he. After graduating high school, Asahara founded a health clinic where he



provided services of yoga, herbal tonics, and acupuncture along with claims that he could cure people's rheumatism and other ailments. Eventually, he was arrested for fraud and was ordered to pay a relatively small fine of \$1,000, which represented only a fraction of his ill-gotten proceeds (p 61).

After returning from a trip to the Himalayas as a self-anointed prophet, Asahara opened a yoga school and publishing house and began to spread his vision. Among other things, Asahara claimed that while meditating on the beach, he was sent a message directly from God instructing him that he had been chosen to "lead God's army" (Hoffman, 1998, p.122). Shortly after receiving this vision, Asahara met an eccentric historian at a mountain retreat who told him that Armageddon would come at the end of the century and that "only a merciful, godly race will survive." Additionally, the historian informed Asahara that "the leader of this race will emerge in Japan" (p. 122). Struck by this convergence of events, Asahara immediately recognized that he was the prophesized leader. He changed his name from the common-sounding Chizuo Matsumoto to the more spiritual Shoko Asahara and began to spread the story of his vision, which over time took on the attributes of myth.

Within three years of opening his successful yoga school and publishing house, Asahara had transformed his company into the center for a new faith, Aum Shinrikyo (Aum 'Supreme Truth'), and appointed himself as guru (Tucker, 2000, p. 209). Fueling the rapid growth of Aum was the peculiar Japanese fascination with obscure religious and mystical cults. During the period of Aum's rise, it is estimated that there were approximately 183,000 different religious cults in Japan, which may help explain the local police force's apathy toward Aum's existence (Hoffman, 1998, p.122). At the peak of operations in 1995, Aum's influence had spread worldwide and the cult had grown immensely. Aum had more than thirty branches located in at least six different countries, and recruiting operations were especially strong in Russia and the United States as the cult began to diversify its assets. For instance, Aum Shinrikyo owned a trading company in Taiwan, a tea plantation in Sri Lanka, and a sheep ranch in Australia (Tucker, p. 209). Estimates of Aum Shinrikyo's size vary, but a generally

accepted figure puts its membership at 40,000 members worldwide. It is estimated that there were 10,000 members in Japan and 30,000 in Russia plus an undetermined number in other countries, such as the United States and Germany (p. 209).

Aum Shinrikyo's members believed that by following Asahara they would attain the same supernatural powers he claimed to possess, such as the ability to levitate and to be able to see and walk through solid objects. Asahara fused Buddhism, Hinduism, and Christianity with a mix of teachings from the French astrologer and seer Nostradamus, whose works were becoming extremely popular in Japan. This combination seemed to especially appeal to young, intelligent Japanese who were "alienated by society's preoccupation with work, success, technology and making money" (Hoffman, 1998, pp. 122-123). At the forefront of their beliefs, meanwhile, was the inevitability of Armageddon. Asahara chose Shiva the Destroyer as the representative deity for his cult and, at a 1987 conference, predicted that nuclear war would break out between 1999 and 2003, which would be caused by the Third World War. To ensure the survival of their members in the wake of this event, Aum sought weapons of mass destruction.

Asahara initially became interested in WMD because he believed that the CIA planned to use nuclear weapons against Japan which, he calculated, would wipe out 90 percent of the population (Tucker, 2000, p. 211). He believed that Aum Shinrikyo would need every weapon available to withstand this attack and to survive Armageddon, which could potentially still be averted if 30,000 people could be recruited and enlightened by Aum. Asahara preached, "Spread the training system of Aum on a global scale and scatter Buddhas over the world. Then we can avoid World War III for sure. I guarantee it" (Hoffman, 1998, p. 123). At other times, he preached that a nuclear Armageddon was inevitable, and that Aum would need these weapons when it alone arose from the devastation to become the supreme power in Japan and then the rest of the world. To strengthen Aum's position and to remain ready to lead the new world, Asahara modeled his organization after the Japanese government. Meanwhile,

he also began to vocalize his contempt for the United States. He blamed the United States for the economic and social problems of Japan, and he proclaimed that American forces and their allies would attack Japan between 1996 and 1998. He predicted that only ten percent of the population would survive this attack. Asahara believed that the United States was even responsible for his health problems, drawing vague connections between U.S. fighter jets flying over Japan and his medical problems. In an apparent connection to his fascination with chemical agents, Asahara reported, "I come under gas attack whenever I travel" (p. 123). He reportedly told his followers, "We need a lot of weapons to prevent Armageddon, and we must prepare them quickly" (p. 124).

Asahara's revenues grew tremendously as he encouraged his followers to donate all of their assets to Aum (a trait commonly seen in apocalyptic organizations) (Stern, 2003, p. 17). Asahara built a compound near Mount Fuji, which included a modern hospital and laboratories for development of chemical and biological weapons. Aum Shinrikyo recruited scientists, physicians, and engineers, including Hideo Murai, an astrophysicist who Asahara selected to become his "engineer of the apocalypse" (Stern, 1999, p. 62). Asahara sent his scientists on trips throughout the world to obtain weapons and training to equip the cult. Aum also took advantage of the failing state of Russia to attract many Russian scientists and engineers in addition to directly purchasing information from them. In fact, not only were Russian weapons and training available for the right price, but on several occasions, members of Aum were trained to use military equipment in Russia (p. 62). One of Aum's Japanese members has even alleged that Oleg Lobov, head of President Yeltsin's Security Council, allowed Aum's scientists direct access to Russia's poison gas program (p. 62).

Aum Shinrikyo researched and eventually produced an extraordinarily frightening array of weapons. Chemical, biological, microwave, and laser weapons were manufactured in Aum's multimillion dollar facilities. In addition, Aum's scientists attempted to buy and manufacture nuclear weapons, and even visited Belgrade inventor Nikola Tesla in the hopes of encouraging him to build a seismological weapon (Tucker, 2000, p. 212). Other members of Aum visited

Zaire, intending to acquire samples of the Ebola virus to culture for biological weapons. With assets worth \$1.4 billion dollars, Aum Shinrikyo had a powerful financial base with which to research, develop, or purchase whatever it desired (Stern, 1999, p. 65).

Aum purchased most of the materials necessary for the production of its chemical and biological weapons through a series of front companies and claimed that these materials were necessary for its pursuit of medical and scientific research. To support their production of sarin, for instance, Aum purchased 90 tons of methanol, 50 tons of diethylaniline, 180 tons of phosphorus trichloride, 550 kilograms of iodine, 950 kilograms of phosphorous pentachloride, 54 tons of sodium fluoride, and 51 tons of isopropyl alcohol (Tucker, 2000, p. 215). Police found 160 drums of peptone in Aum's possession following the subway attacks. Each drum contained 18 liters. Peptone is used for the cultivation of bacteria, and by comparison, university research classes use only about one liter per year (p. 215).

By 1995, Aum Shinrikyo had successfully produced anthrax and botulinum toxin, and was developing Q fever (Tucker, 2000, p. 213). Aum's chemical weapons included sarin, tabun, VX, and soman. Other chemical weapons were considered, but Asahara favored sarin because of its ease of production and lethality. Asahara became obsessed with sarin and its deadly effects to the point that he even wrote a song about it. After the cult successfully produced more than 30 kilograms of sarin, it began to construct a larger facility to efficiently mass-produce the deadly chemical agent. Aum's intention was to be able to produce 2 tons of sarin per day, and it sought to stockpile at least 70 tons for future use (p. 214). Before Japanese police forced Aum to abandon production, the cult was able to stockpile over 10 tons of the precursor chemicals for the production of sarin.

Although there are several formulas to produce sarin, Aum Shinrikyo's formula closely resembles that of the Soviet military. It is alleged that Oleg Lobov, Secretary of the Russian Security Council, sold the blueprints for a sarin

production plant to Aum for 10 million yen (approximately \$100,000) (Tucker, 2000, p. 215-216). But despite the successful production of sarin and other chemical and biological agents, Aum had trouble developing an effective delivery system for the nerve gas as well as for its biological weapons. At least nine test attacks were carried out as Aum attempted to perfect dispersal methods.

Tucker states that the actual use of chemical and biological weapons was not to directly trigger the apocalypse, but was prompted by secondary factors. He says that the cult used these weapons in an attempt to expand its size and influence, to stop the Japanese authorities' intervention in the cult's operations, and to destroy its enemies (Tucker, 2000, p. 208). Asahara ordered attacks throughout Tokyo, at the Imperial Palace, and at the American naval bases of Yokosuka and Yokohama (Stern, 1999, p. 63). Several times Aum attempted to deliver anthrax and botulinum to these areas by using a sprayer device on the back of a vehicle. On another occasion, Aum tried to spread anthrax from the roof of its headquarters building in downtown Tokyo. Although the anthrax was dispersed over a four-day period, no deaths were reported. Another method of attack featured an attaché case rigged with motorized fans and loaded with botulinum. This attack was unsuccessful because the operative reportedly had moral reservations and did not load the botulinum into the cases (Tucker, p. 217). Because none of these 1990 to 1993 attempts to use biological weapons were successful, Aum Shinrikyo turned to its chemical weapons arsenal.

In 1993, Aum Shinrikyo attempted an attack against a rival religious leader using its vehicle sprayer delivery system. This attack was also unsuccessful and nearly killed one of Aum's own members within the vehicle. Aum's first successful attack came in 1994 in the Japanese town of Matsumoto. Aum Shinrikyo attempted to kill three judges who were scheduled to preside over a trial involving Aum's questionable purchase of land in the region. Aum's scientists had developed a vaporizing system consisting of a heating element and an electric fan that was fitted onto the back of a refrigeration truck. Positioned near the judges' living quarters, the operatives sprayed vaporized sarin into the air for ten minutes (Tucker, 2000, p. 218). By the next morning,

seven people had died, six hundred people became ill, dogs lay dead in the street, and fish were floating in the local ponds (Stern, 1999, p. 63). The three judges were among those injured by the attack, and the decision on Aum's land purchase was postponed. Nine months later, Aum Shinrikyo jolted the entire world, just as the Japanese police were finally closing in on the cult's operation.

Asahara knew that the police were a threat to his operations, so he attempted to disrupt their raid on Aum's facilities by attacking the subway station that was nearest to the police station. One month prior to the infamous sarin attack, Aum attempted to release botulinum toxin in the subway. As with previous attempts to use biological weapons, this attack failed. Asahara then declared, "With the use of sarin we shall eradicate major cities" (Hoffman, 1998, p. 126)

On March 20, 1995, five Aum Shinrikyo cultists boarded different trains that were all bound for the Kasumigaseki transfer station. They carried a total of eleven newspaper-wrapped polyethylene pouches that were filled with sarin nerve agent. Their attack was timed to coincide with the morning rush hour, and all five trains were scheduled to arrive within four minutes of one another. The attackers punctured the bags of sarin using umbrellas with sharpened tips and escaped out of the subway as the sarin was evaporating into the air. Passengers were immediately affected by the toxic fumes. Some collapsed and some developed nosebleeds, oral hemorrhages, or convulsions. Overall, Aum Shinrikyo's 1995 attack on the Tokyo subway system killed twelve people and injured more than a thousand. Considerable chaos ensued, and over 5,000 people were examined in hospitals in the first twenty-four hours (Tucker, 2000, p. 219). Only problems with the sarin's purity and dissemination method prevented the number of casualties from being far higher (p. 219).

Two more attacks followed in response to police raids on Aum's facilities. In May of 1995, cult members tried to release hydrogen cyanide in a Japanese train station. They used a plastic bag containing sodium cyanide placed next to another containing sulfuric acid. Attached was an incendiary device and timer

which would ignite the bags and mix the ingredients together, resulting in cyanide gas. In July they attempted the same sort of attack in four separate subway stations simultaneously. Neither of these sets of cyanide attacks was successful. The following table is taken from Jonathan Tucker's *Toxic Terror* (2000) and summarizes Aum Shinrikyo's vast number of attempts to utilize chemical and biological weapons, further emphasizing Japan's blind eye toward this threat (p. 221):

Date	Place	Agent	Casualties	Target	Apparent Motive
April 1990	Tokyo	Botulinum Toxin	None Reported	Mass Civilians	Proof of Prophecy
April 1990	Yokohama	Botulinum Toxin	None Reported	U.S. Navy Base	Proof of Prophecy
April 1990	Yokohama	Botulinum Toxin	None Reported	U.S. Navy Base	Proof of Prophecy
April 1990	Narita	Botulinum Toxin	None Reported	Tokyo Airport	Proof of Prophecy
June 1993	Tokyo	Botulinum Toxin	None Reported	Mass Civilians	Proof of Prophecy
June 1993	Tokyo	Anthrax	None Reported	Mass Civilians	Proof of Prophecy
July 1993	Tokyo	Anthrax	None Reported	Mass Civilians	Proof of Prophecy
July 1993	Tokyo	Anthrax	None Reported	Mass Civilians	Proof of Prophecy
July 1993	Tokyo	Anthrax	None Reported	Mass Civilians	Proof of Prophecy
Nov 1993	Tokyo	Sarin	None Reported	Religious Group	Eliminate Rival Org
Dec 1993	Tokyo	Sarin	1 Injured	Religious Group	Eliminate Rival Org
Dec 1993	Yamanashi Prefecture	Sarin	1 Injured	Anti-Aum Attorney	Eliminate Enemy
June 27, 1994	Matsumoto	Sarin	7 Dead, 144 Injured	Judges	Stop Adverse Court Decision
Dec 2, 1994	Tokyo	VX	1 Injured	Senior Citizen	Eliminate Enemy
Dec 12, 1994	Osaka	VX	1 Dead	Office Worker	Eliminate Enemy
Jan 1995	Tokyo	VX	1 Injured	Anti-Aum Activist	Eliminate Enemy
Mar 1995	Tokyo Subway	Botulinum Toxin	None Reported	Police / Mass Civilian	Stop Police Probe/ Havoc
Mar 20, 1995	Tokyo Subway	Sarin	12 Dead, over 1,000 Injured	Police / Mass Civilian	Stop Police Probe/ Havoc
May 5, 1995	Tokyo Subway	Hydrogen Cyanide	Four Injured	Mass Civilian	Cause Havoc
July 4, 1995	Tokyo Subway	Hydrogen Cyanide	None Reported	Mass Civilian	Cause Havoc

**Figure 1. Aum Shinrikyo's Attacks. (From Tucker, 2000, p. 221)**

Fortunately, Aum Shinrikyo's attack on the Tokyo subway system was hastily planned and executed, and it did not represent the cult's true capacity for terrorism. Aum was reportedly working with North Korea, Russian Mafia groups, and Iran (indirectly) to smuggle nuclear materials and conventional weapons out of Russia (Stern, 1999, p. 65). According to the CIA, Aum was also actively trying to purchase Russian nuclear warheads while simultaneously plotting a chemical attack in the United States. In addition to the sarin which police found stockpiled—enough to kill an estimated 4.2 million people—Aum also possessed a Russian Mi-17 helicopter and two remotely piloted vehicles which they planned to use to disseminate an aerosol weapon over populated areas (p. 65). Even so, Aum's attempt to develop its nuclear capability has to be considered more frightening still.

The group purchased a 500,000-acre sheep ranch in remote Western Australia where it intended to mine uranium. The uranium would then be shipped back to Japan where Aum's scientists would convert it to weapons-grade nuclear material using some of the most advanced techniques developed. A massive explosion in 1993 near Aum's Australian nuclear research facility sent shock waves hundreds of miles and lit up the surrounding sky for miles (Hoffman, 1998, p. 126). This explosion has yet to be explained, but speculation remains that it was connected to Aum's nuclear weapons development.

Aum Shinrikyo's potential for violence was enormous, and the cult's fatalistic belief in Armageddon made it a serious threat to the rest of the world. Most interesting in this case study is the remarkable number of attacks and the growth of this cult in Japan, a homogenous country that is typified by tight living quarters and has seen the effects of weapons of mass destruction first hand. If such a cult can prosper and go unnoticed in a society such as Japan, surely one could thrive in the United States under the blanket of our civil liberties. However, in today's technological world, it's not only large organized groups that pose a problem. Technology has now reached a point where even smaller groups have great potential to cause a tremendous amount of harm.



### C. SMALL GROUPS

In his book, *No End to War* (2003), Walter Laqueur contends that the terrorism of the future may be increasingly influenced by small groups. In contrast to the past, when larger political terrorist groups acted to influence an audience, Laqueur believes that smaller groups are now empowered by technology to carry out their own terrorist campaigns (p. 212). Additionally, Laqueur argues that it is easier for a smaller group to be swayed by an irrational ideology, and such a group is, therefore, potentially more dangerous. In *Toxic Terror* (2000), Jonathon Tucker agrees. As he puts it:

Convinced of their own moral superiority and their relationship with a higher power, new religious terrorists care little for the beliefs and opinions of society and tend to execute their terrorist acts for no audience but themselves and God. As a result, they may experience fewer constraints with respect to the use of mass-casualty weapons. (p. 284)

Given the availability of the right resources, an individual or small group with violent intentions has great potential to be a deadly adversary on our home soil. Recent examples of this potential include the Unabomber and Aum Shinrikyo, as well as the ricin and Anthrax attackers who have yet to be identified. Among domestic right wing groups, there is a drive toward “leaderless resistance” - wherein individuals operate alone toward a shared goal. The Internet is an ideal source of advertising for such groups who only need to publicize their ideas, which are protected under their rights to free speech. If these individuals or small groups obtain weapons of mass destruction, the results could be catastrophic. An efficient biological attack using ebola, smallpox, tularemia, or anthrax could easily produce over 1,000,000 casualties – much different from the worst-case scenario of the past (Laqueur, p. 227).

Unfortunately, identifying a terrorist individual or small group before they act is extremely difficult in most cases. For example, the Unabomber was only identified after his own brother turned him in. Additionally, authorities suspect that it was an individual and not a group who sent the Anthrax letters because he has left no apparent trail. Both of these individuals had very little interaction with

others concerning their intentions and were motivated by “unexpected” convergences. Obviously, this is the worst case – an individual (or pair of individuals, such as the Beltway Snipers) who choose to commit a series of attacks without any outside support. Slightly larger groups, such as the Branch Davidians, CSA, or the Minnesota Patriots Council may be easier to monitor, especially if they are actively recruiting. Recruiting new members requires organizations to communicate and advertise their beliefs to outsiders—through the Internet, cell phones, or public demonstrations—which provides authorities with an avenue for exploitation. The trend toward smaller groups directly affects the ability of the government to monitor these groups and complicates the issue of civil liberties. First, not only are small groups—or even individuals—often more difficult to monitor than larger, well defined organizations, but government focus on such a seemingly small threat may appear as individual persecution. Such extreme focus could very well trigger a “use it or lose it” response, creating an attack that might not otherwise have occurred.

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## IV. THE CHALLENGES AHEAD

### A. INTRODUCTION

Sometimes, the threads of history are consistent and predictable, particularly when they impact people directly, such as famine exacerbating an already poor economy. But, sometimes elements may converge in very unexpected ways, and in today's world, where technology enables smaller and smaller groups to be more powerful, it is even more important that we have methods in place to identify and contain these potentially lethal terrorists. The problem, of course, is how does an open, democratic society such as ours—one that places significant importance on civil liberties—deal with dangerous, internal threats?

Assuming that we know what to look for—charismatic leaders with an anti-social ideology, a mass of zealous followers, and converging social factors that can potentially enable the leaders and his followers to be successful in their quest—how can we monitor these groups without impeding upon the individual members' rights as U.S. citizens? The United States' Constitution and the Bill of Rights provide Americans with freedoms that are rare throughout the rest of the world. We are a relatively young nation that has fought hard to gain and maintain these freedoms. Now, with the advent of our "War on Terror," we are faced with a tough question: will we have to give up a portion of our civil rights in order to ensure the protection of the society as a whole? "Freedom isn't free," as the saying goes - there may be a price to pay. We may have to accept at least temporary—but reasonable—reductions of some civil liberties in order to protect our nation. Finding the balance between civil liberties and the safety of Americans will not be easy, but the reality of the threat demands substantive debate to discuss the potential need to reduce liberties *before* additional, large-scale terrorist events occur.

Naturally, not all Americans would readily agree with the imposition of such restrictions, which could cause fissures, or the widening of existing fissures

within our society. Some organizations, such as militia groups and certain religiously based cults, are already predisposed to be wary of the government. Some groups, like the CSA and the Branch Davidians, stockpiled weapons, intending to protect themselves should the government turn on them. While restrictions on civil liberties would likely feed the paranoia of such groups, losing liberties might also provide the impetus for new organizations to form. At least a partial solution to this can be found through education. The government must be ready to educate the public about why long-held civil liberties need to be curtailed. Details, including timetables, new limitations of government agencies, and the reasons behind the changes must be clearly and openly communicated to the people. Occasionally, the government must demonstrate how new programs are proving fruitful, sharing its success stories of captures and thwarted terrorist plots.

What is the appropriate amount of government interaction or surveillance that is necessary to ensure the safety of America's citizens? In the case of Aum Shinrikyo, the Japanese government was hesitant to interfere, which enabled the cult to grow immensely and eventually turn offensive with chemical and biological attacks. At the other extreme is the government siege of the Branch Davidians at Waco. It is a fine line that we must walk between too little and too much government intervention, and our country must decide what it values more. Although still faced with this same dilemma, Japan continues to be hesitant to intervene. In 1995, Aum Shinrikyo changed its name to Aleph, elected a new leader, and renounced its violent past. Still boasting 1,500 to 2,000 current, active members, Aleph continues to have access to significant levels of technology, conducting videoconferences and Internet meetings with its followers. Although the cult has been outlawed in Russia, "Japanese authorities have been reluctant to invoke a 1952 anti-subversive law that would ban the group, citing concerns for civil liberties and religious freedom" (Choy, 2002). Considering today's trend toward smaller groups and the power available to such groups, government monitoring and interaction becomes increasingly difficult.

## **B. RESOURCES**

Technology has not only improved the terrorists' weapons, but has also expanded terrorists' access to information. Just as the printing press enabled religious dissenters to communicate more broadly, the Internet (along with magazines and other publications, which are protected under our rights of free speech), allows confidential communication of ideas and access to an unprecedented number of information sources. As helpful as these vast information sources can be to the public, they can also be used to pass information about how to build a truck bomb out of everyday materials or how to assassinate public leaders with seeds from a plant.

In 1994 and 1995 four members of the Minnesota Patriots Council, an anti-government organization, were the first to be convicted under the 1989 Biological Weapons Anti-Terrorism Act. These men had acquired a supply of ricin and intended to use it to assassinate local and federal law enforcement officials (Tucker, 2000, p. 159). The instructions explaining how to turn castor beans into ricin poison were ordered from the *CBA Bulletin*, a right-wing publication that was subscribed to by one of the members. The advertisement for the "Silent Tool of Justice" kit pledged that "a single bean will kill an evildoer" and offered "interesting suggestions for preparation and delivery, etc." (p. 168). Included in the kit were ten castor beans and the instructions for processing them in a home lab to produce the deadly poison. Ricin is approximately 200 times more deadly than cyanide and has no antidote as it induces vomiting, fever, weakness, and eventually death in its victim. Ricin was used in 1978 by a Bulgarian secret service agent who assassinated dissident Geogi Markov in London by firing a ricin-laced pellet from an umbrella-gun (p. 168). When arrested, the Minnesota Patriots Council possessed enough ricin to kill 129 people (p. 174). Many right-wing organizations, hate groups, and apocalyptic sects already have their own Internet Web sites, which they use to recruit followers, disseminate ideology, and sell propaganda.

Jessica Stern, in her interview with Kerry Noble of CSA, asked him if he thought the former leader of CSA, James Ellison, was still dangerous. Noble responded, "If he envisions the End Times rolling around again, there is no telling what he could do" (Stern, 2003, p. 29). Stern then asked if he thought that Ellison would try to obtain weapons that were more sophisticated than cyanide. Noble stated:

I don't think there is anything anywhere at this point that he would not have access to, or that some member of a radical group would not have access to. They have such an intelligence network that would have knowledge about any kind of weapons of mass destruction. The Internet and word of mouth. CSA had numerous prophets that would drop by that would carry messages about technical matters related to weapons. (pp. 29-30)

Access to weapons and information about weapons is becoming increasingly easy to obtain, not only on the Internet, but from first-hand sources. Following the end of the Cold War and the restructuring of the Soviet Union, the security and accounting for Russia's nuclear arsenal dwindled. There is no possible way for the former Soviet Union to adequately monitor all of its border crossings, and the economic decline within the former superpower has forced some of its scientists to seek employment elsewhere.

Most small groups will not have access to the amounts of money required to obtain a nuclear weapon on the black market. Most will not have the connections or be able to afford to hire scientists from the former Soviet Union. There are many problems associated with the development and delivery of these types of weapons but, as seen in the Aum Shinrikyo case study, it *has* happened. Aum was able to use its charismatic leader, along with its popular ideology, to grow as a legal corporation until it achieved sufficient size and wealth to be able to obtain and test these exotic weapons. Recruitment of scientists did not raise suspicions within Japan based on the technology-driven culture within that country. It is also feasible that domestic right-wing groups could use their world-wide contacts to obtain these types of weapons from state-sponsored terrorist organizations.

### **C. TABOOS**

Those weapons and targets that were considered taboo in the past are increasingly being considered by today's terrorists. This alarming trend is propagated by Aum's boldness as well as al Qaeda's 9/11 attacks. Civilians are now considered to be targets by many terrorist organizations, and there seems to be a trend away from typical terrorist goals of the past. Smaller groups have less of a public base to appeal to and are, therefore, more likely to have fewer qualms concerning their methods of operations. Groups such as al Qaeda may no longer be influenced by the political ramifications of their actions. They are just as happy to kill a large number of their enemies in the course of their jihad. Although there are many constraints regarding the use of weapons of mass destruction - such as cost, technological knowledge, procurement, and dissemination methods - one successful attack would be catastrophic.

Other taboos that may be eroding involve terrorists' targets and their disregard for collateral damage. We see this increasingly through modern suicide bombings, kidnappings, and public assassinations. Luckily, the United States has experienced no incidents of suicide attacks thus far. Given our freedoms, minimal security, and our trusting way of life, a round of suicide bombings could be extremely productive for terrorist groups in disrupting our feelings of security. Equally disturbing would be targeted assassinations. The recent kidnappings and assassinations in Iraq could well inspire copy-cat attacks from small domestic terrorist groups. These smaller groups, motivated by what many would consider to be irrational aims, could benefit from adapting this technique in the United States. We have seen the effect that targeted assassinations can have in the case of abortion clinic killings. Clinics even in places without violence have closed, which sends a message to other terrorists that this method is worthwhile. Additionally, many anti-government groups already preach that they should try government officials for misuse of power and wrongful taxation (and many of these groups do hold trials, with the accused official tried in absentia). A videotape of a government official being tortured or beheaded could be used to send a powerful message to others. Luckily, these



methods have not yet caught on here, but there is little—in place or in practice—to prevent them from doing so.

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

Even as we continue to focus on the enemy that attacked us on that sunny September day in 2001, we must remain vigilant for threats generated from within our borders. In examining the possible rise of domestic, religious-based terrorist threats, it is important to understand how converging factors may result in bringing about such a threat. As our review of history shows, social upheavals and religious violence, centering on the frictions between faith and secular life, are not exceptional at all. Instead, they appear as cyclic events across time, even in our own western society. This may appear to restate the truism that “history repeats itself.” However, it is important to note that such “replays” are not exact: The key lies in the recurrent *patterns* of converging factors, the consistent threads that bind those factors, and the social geography of where and when the convergence occurs.

In tracing the history of convergences from the Reformation to the Great Awakenings, and on to today, some patterns and trends clearly stand out. For example, the conjunction of economic turmoil, new or modified technologies, social uncertainties, and changes in the means of destruction, and individuals who manage to see opportunities are all present in every case. As we look back, however, we see technology as probably the most important factor in the pattern that contributes directly to change. It was technology that finally allowed the ideas and ideals of the Reformation to take hold, and it was technology that allowed George Whitefield and Joseph Smith to gain followers, and it is today’s technology that enables modern religious extremists to not only gain and maintain followers, but also offer incredible levels of destructive capability. At the same time, there appears to be a trend of accelerating responses to convergences, as well as intensified challenges to government even as smaller groups become more and more capable of influence or destruction.

Of course, using history as a guide, it would seem in hindsight that convergences are inevitable events; the challenge is to somehow gain foresight

of those convergences that may grow into conflict. The question is: what is the best means to alleviate, if not control, the way converging factors are playing out today? Considering the challenges posed by maintaining civil liberties, controlling resources, and dealing with eroding taboos, it would appear that the best method should center on monitoring the social landscape for the signs of potential conflict. This requires a dual-focused approach, one that constantly evaluates how available technology could be used for sinister purposes, while at the same time keeping an eye on who is preaching what. After all, it is these two components, the tools of destruction and the leader who can successfully call for their use, that offer the best opportunity for intervention or—in the worst case—immediate response.

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